A Resource Guide of Best Practices for Pregnant and Parenting Teen Programs

Case Management and Family Support Services

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Best Practices

Rationale

Case management and coordination of family services are vital in providing comprehensive services to pregnant and parenting teens and their children. The benefits of school-based case management include the provision of a single point of contact for the student in the coordination of services (child day care, preventive health care, prenatal care, attendance monitoring, etc.). The case manager should be a liaison between home and school and help students develop skills to access community services, as well as build confidence and capacity to be self-sufficient.

Case management services may be provided by school personnel or through a community program. An effective case management approach coordinates the various social service agencies serving teen parents and their families, helping to reduce duplication of services and increasing the likelihood of adherence to individual service plans.

Strategies

Identification and Outreach

Identifying pregnant and parenting teens for school-based programs necessitates advertising available services, establishing access to services, and developing a productive working relationship within and outside of the school. Successful programs have used the following strategies:

- posters, fliers, brochures;
- presentations to faculty;
networking with counselors, school nurses, administrators, teachers;
- presentations to Student Assistance Programs in schools;
- ongoing contacts with Family Support Centers;
- contacts with other agencies working with teen parents;
- prenatal clinic contacts; and
- contacts with family planning centers.

**Engaging Students and Their Families**

Family engagement is an important and necessary part of case management services to teen parents. The nuclear family and extended family, including grandparents, often have a great deal of involvement with young parents. Involving them in counseling and other social support services may help achieve a successful service plan completion.

Good case management involves building a trusting relationship with teen parents and their families, and empowering them to work in partnership for decision making. Home visits also can be a helpful tool in assessing the family's strengths and needs.

**Assessment of Strengths and Needs/Development of the Service Plan**

Case managers interview students to assess and identify social, academic, family and health care needs, emphasizing strengths, self-sufficiency and accountability. A service plan is developed that includes:

- identification of strengths;
- identification of realistic goals;
- identification of needed resources;
- development of a contract with students, which clearly identifies responsibilities, goals and consequences; and
- regular review of plans and revisions as the situation warrants.

**Monitoring and Record Keeping**

Case managers monitor and evaluate service delivery and modify service plans with the student and family as needed. Confidential case management notes and narratives should be kept to follow the student's progress over time.

Records are kept on:
- attendance and academic performance;
- levels of family and social functioning;
- progress in areas including health care, child care, life plans;
- agency contacts and referrals; and
- evaluation of service delivery.

**Identification of Community Resources**
Case managers act as advocates for the student in school, the service network, the community and the family. Services may include:

- help to access needed services and develop productive working relationships within the service network;
- assurances the student did seek and obtain the community-based services;
- acting as a mediator between the student and provider as needed; and
- evaluating with the student and family whether the agreed-upon activities and services were effective and whether personal goals were met.

Counseling and Advocacy

Case managers provide support and access to counseling with appropriate referrals to service providers that focus on:

- academic and career counseling;
- one-on-one counseling;
- group counseling; and
- family mediation.

Frequency of Contact

Frequency of student/case manager contact depends on the needs of the teen parent.

Training of Case Managers

Specific knowledge or experience related to teen pregnancy and parenting as well as effective social work practices are a necessity for good case management. Knowledge areas should include:

- methods of family support;
- knowledge of child and adolescent development;
- knowledge of child abuse laws and mental health, sexual abuse, violence, mediation techniques, family planning, etc.;
- nutritional needs of children and pregnant adolescents;
- knowledge of available community resources including WIC, shelters, health services; and
- needs assessment training.
Best Practices

Pittsburgh Public Schools
The teen parenting program works with Family Centers to coordinate home visits and deliver home study materials. Family Center staff are trained as Parent Educators through the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program and do monthly PAT home visits working with mother and child on child development and parenting. Newly hired caseworkers shadow experienced caseworkers for a week of training to observe techniques in working with teen parents.

Contact: Kathy Short (412) 488-2524

Greater Johnstown School District
Home visitation provides an opportunity for the case manager to assess and encourage family strengths. Greater Johnstown Teen Parent Staff take pictures of teen parents’ children during home visits for use in family development activities. This is a relatively simple, inexpensive activity. In many instances, the young people had no access to a camera, and this is their first opportunity to experience an activity common to many families.

Contact: Jane Matthews (814) 533-5538

Delaware County Intermediate Unit
The time period when a student is recovering from childbirth provides a natural context for making a home visit. The following issues are addressed: health and nutrition for mother and child; follow-up health care; immunizations; and basic infant care. Discussion focuses on any barriers that would interfere with the student's return to school.

Contact: Adele Peters (610) 622-0211

Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit
Case management, using certified Parents As Teachers (PAT) educators, provides a home visitation program which empowers the teen parent as the first and most influential teacher of her child. Each visit includes an age appropriate activity with the child as well as a discussion about development and educational handouts for the parent.

Contact: Jeanette Lewis (570) 523-1155 x317